

THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE

ADVENTUS

JOINING A HOPE THAT HAS COME

Welcome and Film Intro

Welcome to the season of Advent, a season of wondering and waiting; a season where much of the movement is a looking deep within for the call and our response. Advent shows up on the church calendar post-Autumn equinox when there is less daylight and more night time, and ends just after the winter Solstice when night begins to get shorter and daylight once again starts its return.

Spiritually speaking, the season of Advent is much like a womb-time, at least for people in our area of the world who are snugly wrapped in the long hours darkness. As Christians, we *wait* together anticipating Jesus' birth while simultaneously looking toward the future reign of Christ. Advent ends on the eve Christmas, it ends with the birth of Jesus—the Light of the World who broke through the darkness with a new way of seeing.

Over the years, Christmas has grown into a consumer-driven holiday, far from a holy day. There is a muchness to it now that can be overwhelming, and our waiting takes on a more superficial posture as we stand in check out lines or are stalled out in shopping traffic jams. Much of the inner-light seeking is dimmed by the decorations of the season. And, while all the gift giving and receiving can be fun, and all the twinkling Christmas lights are beautiful to witness, to paraphrase parts of John 1 (my personal favorite of all the gospel readings), these are not the full measure of being nor the true Light, but a mere projection of our hope that a higher power is with us and for us.

AdventUs: Joining a Hope that has Come is a hymn for a time such as now, a collective of voices speaking blessing and encouragement to the light within each of us. It's a song rising from the deepest indwelling truth that Christ not only came to earth through Jesus, but is still coming through to this day by and through those who awaken to the gift and answer the call. Accepting the gift of this inner glimmer awakens us to a God that we can emerge with, have faith in, and give our trust to all while learning God is putting life, love, faith, trust, and hope in us—imagine it:

We are becoming the fullness of Christ.

We are the vehicles of such a love here and now.

We become the love that breaks through,

remains,
traverses time and space,
wears our humanity,
and leads us to move towards God
who leads us toward ourselves and one another.

God put Godself in human form, God has placed hope in us. What are we to do with it?

A Few Notes to Consider

Discernment vs. Debate - More than right or wrong answers to be conjured or debated, the hope for this film is to provide space for personal and communal deep listening. It's not about whether one agrees or disagrees with a speaker, it's where we are led. Again, the intention is spiritual discernment not intellectual analysis or doctrinal debate (in general of course). Healthy wrestling and mid-rash stirs the imagination, but we find circling in the land of who is right or wrong doesn't necessarily create a soil that nurtures discovery and transformation.

Individuals - For deeper listening consider simple but fruitful practices like journaling as thoughts rise up while listening through the film, passages, prayers, and questions. We have found taking a short mindful walk before watching a film can help create focus. And, even just putting your feet on the ground and taking in a slow, deep breath with a long, slow exhale can be reorienting. Every time.

Groups - If you're watching the film as a new group, consider having participants share a little bit of their faith journey and what brings them to the space. The connectedness created by the vulnerability of folks sharing just a little bit about their story with others goes a long way to nurturing the soil of deep listening.

A word about sharing, and responding to others in a group discussion. Be present as possible, and consider responding to others' sharing by sticking with "I" statements. Try to not overdo it with "advice-giving" to others. :) Instead of offering correction, try to "hear each other into deeper speech."

Also for groups, if possible, consider sending a few leading questions to ponder to participants before the group meets. Living with the content a bit ahead of time creates the potential to make for a richer conversation since folks might be sharing and responding from a deeper, marinated voice.

Spiritual Practices - Throughout this guide there are a few prompts to take a deep breath. We usually offer things for you to consider but in this case, *take them*. We don't breathe enough as it is, and it helps you to fully enter the current moment. At the end of this guide, you will find a suggested practice on waiting and witnessing. Feel free to work with it, modify it and make it

your own throughout Advent. If you are part of a group, perhaps this is a point you can connect over throughout the season.

Preparing to Listen

Use this time to get ready to listen to and watch the film.

First give some thought to *how* you want to watch and listen. For instance, you may decide that you want to listen for the particular word or phrase that pops out for you. In this case, you might want to have a pen and paper handy to capture it when it grabs you. Don't overthink it. Just open yourself to whatever comes, to whatever word or phrase flashes before you as if suddenly in neon lights. You can sort out why you think those words called to you later.

In addition to preparing to notice a particular word or phrase, you might also want to put yourself in the mode of allowing the film to take you back in time. Sometimes the way God speaks to us is not directly through the words of another but through a memory which those words reminded us of. So, yes, listen intently to the speakers in the film, but don't be afraid to let yourself drift a bit as you listen. Let the words of the speakers carry you back and reconnect you with a memory that echoes their content.

Finally, you might also want to prepare by thinking ahead of time a little bit about the key theme you will encounter in the film. We don't want to give too much away, but some useful questions to think about in advance include:

- What if God is waiting on us?
- What do you look forward to God undoing within?
- What are my blockages to God? What is my resistance, what is my stubbornness, what is my closed-down-ness?

Stop. Quiet yourself. Take in a deep breath and let it out slowly. Take in the following verse from John 1. Maybe speak it out loud to yourself or ask a reader or two to read it if you are part of a group, letting the words lead you. Write down what you want to take with you. Keep listening :)

**BEFORE TIME ITSELF WAS MEASURED,
THE VOICE WAS SPEAKING.
THE VOICE WAS AND IS GOD.**

THIS CELESTIAL WORD REMAINED EVER PRESENT WITH THE CREATOR;

**HIS SPEECH SHAPED THE ENTIRE COSMOS.
IMMERSED IN THE PRACTICE OF CREATING,
ALL THINGS THAT EXIST WERE BIRTHED IN HIM.**

**HIS BREATH FILLED ALL THINGS
WITH A LIVING, BREATHING LIGHT—**

**A LIGHT THAT THRIVES IN THE DEPTHS OF DARKNESS,
BLAZES THROUGH MURKY BOTTOMS.
IT CANNOT AND WILL NOT BE QUENCHED.**

—JOHN 1:1-5, THE VOICE BIBLE

Watch and Listen

Got everything you need? Time to take in the film. Instead of analyzing the film, let it do the discovery work in you. Practice noticing. There are two ancient practices of noticing, one is Lectio Divina (listening for a word, thought, or idea) and then there is Visio Divina (watching for an image and letting it lead you). If something someone says strikes you and you want to resonate with it more, jot it down. If there is an image that moves you, go back to it. Press pause and spend some time with it.

On to the film.

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/adventus>

Discernment / Discussion Questions

Read and listen through the questions below. Does anything in particular from the questions stir or inspire you? Maybe something from the film not listed that stood out for you? Don't force any relation to any of the questions, and don't expect yourself (or the group if that is the case) to respond to every question. Listen deeply to what you are supposed to hear while letting your life speak.

Can you imagine what being in a womb was like? Before you had language, what was a thought? Before you had words for anything you felt whether it was warm or cold, the hiccups, the touch of your own limbs against your body, or your mother's mood swings, can you imagine what you felt? When does curiosity begin? Wombs are a liminal space, a place to grow in before emerging to the next phase in life. Checking in with yourself, what do you think? What do you feel? What is emerging in you?

When is the last time you went out and looked up in wonder at the stars? Took in the light that has taken thousands of years to make it to your eye? What do you find yourself wondering about?

How far does Love go? Where have you found Love in desolate places?

What does your Jesus look like? What does his humanity look like to you? What does his humanity mean to you?

Jesus is God showing up in our humanity to be fully human. What does being fully human call you towards? What is the risk of living into your values and beliefs?

If Jesus were to come like a thief in the night, what would you want him to steal away with? What does your version of wrath look like?

Taking a view from a higher elevation of your life, where do you see God already alive and well and active in your circumstances? How do you move towards God and get in on what God is already doing?

“If you don’t expect the unexpected, you won’t find it.” Reviewing your life, where have you seen a miracle?

How has Jesus inspired you into a new way of being?

It was stated in the film that God is “an other-centered, self-giving love that wants to be shared.” What is the gift of being you? How do you make the most of this gift by sharing yourself in the world?

More questions to listen through to stir your imagination and memory :)

Where did the video or listening through the questions take you?

Did listening lead you back to an experience in your past?

Was anything there that gave you a new lens to view a story of your past through?

Did listening help you hear any call of your own inner voice?

How did anything change the way you view the story to your life?

Did anything leave you with a challenge for your life, possibly changing the way you want to walk in the world?

Deeper Listening / Responding / Sharing

Journal what you rose up for you. Hold it with curiosity over judgment if possible. (Remember note-taking is science!) For group discussion, share with others what you are hearing and/or respond to a question or two. (Please don’t respond to them all :))

Closing / Moving Forward

As a closing encouragement and reminder, we'd like to acknowledge that there are times our spiritual (r)evolution can feel like chaos. The liminal space we move in and out of during our faith walk is an UNCOMFORTABLE NECESSARY for our maturity. Listen to Brené Brown's words from the film.

Take one last moment before the hustle and bustle of the season rushes in to enjoy a few deep breaths. Read and ponder the following words, listening, again, to what is for you. Take these phrases and what you have heard throughout this session with you as you move forward from here.

**LOVE DOES ALL THE HARD THINGS.
LOVE LOVES THE UNLOVABLE.
LOVE DOESN'T TOLERATE SHAME.
LOVE DOESN'T TOLERATE ATTACKS.**

LOVE BECOMES DANGEROUS TO PEOPLE.

**GOD IS LOVE,
AND JESUS IS WHAT LOVE LOOKS LIKE
MADE FLESH.**

— BRENÉ BROWN

The Practice of Waiting

When we spend our time wishing everything would just go faster we are *not fully present*. Advent is a great season to practice waiting, and if we are so daring, *patiently* waiting. One practice we found offers this suggestion for using the word WAIT as an acronym:

Watch: What is actually happening?

Accept: Allow what is here to be here.

Investigate: What is the story you are making up?

Tend: Practice patience and compassion for yourself and others.

This is a presence practice. We can do this while being on hold, while waiting in lines, while waiting for people and things because we are learning to notice, become curious, and to see with different eyes. How's our breathing? Where's our focus, is it on the future, the past, or are we current to right now?

As we learn to notice, we will be shaping our eyes for the unexpected, and with our wider lens, we can start to see what God is up to in the world when we sink below the superficial

aggravations of the season, when we slow and study. Where is love? Where is hope? Where are the miracles? Where can we get in on what God is doing?

Explore More

A few additional resources to consider exploring throughout Advent:

Matter Matters with Barbara Brown Taylor

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/matter-matters>

Counted

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/counted>

Courage

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/courage>

The Fresh Radiance of Christ with Alexander John Shaia

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/the-fresh-radiance-of-christ>

A Womb for a Wounded World by Malcolm Guite:

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/a-womb-for-a-wounded-world>

The Waiting: an Advent Reflection Series by Kelly Ann Hall

https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/film_series/the-waiting

Make Room by Kelly Ann Hall

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/make-room>

And so much more by searching the library at twotp.com using the key word “Advent”